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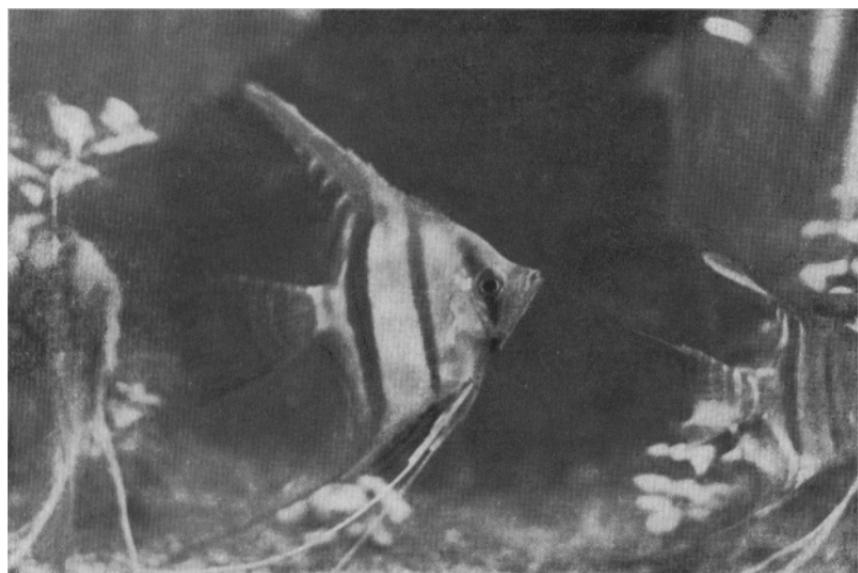
Tropical Fish

HOW TO SET UP AND MAINTAIN AN AQUARIUM

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With photographs by courtesy of John G. Shedd Aquarium

The tropical fish hobby that has been gaining in popularity for the past ten years now comes into its own and takes its place as one of the foremost and interesting hobbies of all. Twenty-five years ago when rare fish sometimes cost as much as two hundred dollars apiece, this was a hobby exclusively for rich men, but in the ensuing years breeders and importers have succeeded in lowering prices to such an extent that everyone may enjoy these beautiful pets.



Rasbora.

Today many doctors, dentists, hospitals, and schools have aquariums that are beautifully planted with rare aquatic plants and are stocked with multi-colored fishes from all over the world. Sometimes doctors recommend aquariums as a means for complete relaxation for nervous patients. That is not difficult to believe when one realizes just what happens in an aquarium. In one corner a female with her newly-horn babies around her is guarding them from harm ; in another part of the tank a beautifully colored male is courting a female, and their antics are enough to keep even the most blasé spectator on edge to see what happens next. These and many other interesting things are

part of the daily life of the tropical fish ; twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, they are on hand to parade their home life before your eyes, for unlike other pets, fish never sleep.

In selecting your aquarium. the size and quality are important factors. A better type of aquarium is cheaper in the long run as it is to be your fishes' home for a long time. Sizes range from one to one hundred gallons, but since a one-gallon tank only holds five fishes at the most, a ten-gallon is considered the most appropriate size for the beginner for it will comfortably hold ten pairs of fishes of average size.



Corydoras.

Next we need sand. This is very inexpensive and is available in a wide variety of colors. Let us assume we will use brown sand. For a ten-gallon tank we will need twenty pounds, figuring two pounds to a gallon. Never use beach sand; it is not practicable for it must be cured and treated before using it in an aquarium, and in view of the low cost of purchasable aquarium sand this is not worth the trouble.

The most popular and most suitable plant for aquarium purposes is *Vallisneria*. This is a beautiful plant with long leaves, which will propagate rapidly. About two dozen plants, arranged in the rear of the aquarium, will provide a green background which will enhance the beauty of the fish. Other popular plants are *Cabomba*, *Ludwigia*, *Anacharis*, and *Sagittaria*. These plants can be arranged according to individual tastes.

The best location for the aquarium is in front of or close to a window where the sun will shine on it for at least a few hours a day. Sun-light is beneficial but not necessary if you have artificial lighting which can be obtained with electrically lighted hoods or with side reflectors. Top-lighting is preferable because it stimulates plant growth to a greater degree and because it reveals the beauty of the fish more

than side-lighting. Without sunlight, several hours of artificial lighting are needed daily.

Rinse the sand thoroughly before using, because it picks up dust enroute. Unwashed sand is not harmful but may cause the tank to be cloudy for a while. After the washed sand is placed in the aquarium, fill the tank half full of water. In arranging the plants, the taller ones such as *Vallisneria* are placed along the back of the tank, half an inch apart. In planting, grasp the root of the plant with thumb and index finger and push it gently into the sand. Be careful not to plant too deeply, as roots may choke and rot.

After the aquarium is planted, cover the surface of the water either with newspaper or waxed paper and then pour water gently over the paper until the aquarium is full. This procedure will prevent the plants from being uprooted and the sand disarranged.

A newly planted aquarium should stand at least two clays before fish are introduced. It is well during this period to leave the light on as much as possible so that plants may take root. Avoid fresh tap water and water that is too cold.

The following tropical fishes are among those which may be kept together in the ten gallon tank.

GUPPY

The guppy, one of the most hardy and prolific of all tropical fishes belonging to the live-bearing family, is known almost to everyone. It will breed anywhere, even under difficult conditions, bringing forth its young about every six weeks. As in most tropical fishes, the males are the more beautiful. They are extremely variable and, of all the millions that have been sold, there have probably never been two exactly alike. The females are much less brilliant, a rather drab olive with a green iridescence. They grow to a length of two and a half inches while the males seldom exceed one inch. In buying live-bearing fishes it is best to have two females to one male.

BLACK MOLLIE

The male is jet black with golden eyes and a beautiful sail-fin ; it ranges from one and a half to two and a half inches in length. The female is also black, but not quite as striking as the male, and reaches a length of two to three inches. This species also breeds quite readily in almost any tank.

THE PLATY FAMILY

The fishes of this group are of many beautiful colors : black, green, gold, and red. The red platy is a graceful, showy fish, very popular among fanciers. The male is about an inch long and the female an inch and a half.

BLACK TETRA, AND ITS COUSIN THE RED TETRA

These fish look somewhat alike except for coloring, the black tetra being silver with jet black fins and the red tetra being silver with brilliant red fins. Both fish are ideal for aquarium life and are hardy and peaceful. They average an inch in size.

ZEBRA FISH

These fish are ideal for any aquarium, being hardy and striking in color. The back is greenish, the sides blue with six golden stripes running horizontally along the body. They are fast swimmers, usually staying near the top. They range in size from three-quarters of an inch to two inches.

RASBORA HETEROMORPHA

This is the most beautiful of the Rasbora family, deservedly having the title "Queen of the Aquarium." The body is silvery white, glistening blue and pink, with the rear part and all fins pink, and a blue-black wedge-shaped spot on either side starting at the middle and ending at the tail. Size is usually from one to one and a half inches.

Since no aquarium is complete without a scavenger to take care of the waste matter and excess food, it is advisable to have some of the South American catfishes. Two of the most popular are the :

CORYDORAS AENEUS AND CORYDORAS LEOPARDUS

The former has no common name but the latter is called the leopard catfish. The members of this family, oddly enough, are known as the only fish that wink. Watching them as they scurry along the bottom in search of food, you will see a very definite wink. The *aeneus* is golden brown and salmon pink along the bottom of the body. The leopard has spots—hence the name—and three black lines along the top near the dorsal fin. Both range from an inch and a half to four inches.

That completes the ten gallon tank. It should be a beautiful and interesting addition to the home and will give you many fascinating hours.

The only care needed now is the feeding of the fishes every day. Just a pinch of food is all they need. You can obtain tropical fish food at the place where you buy your tropical fish. Get several kinds and alternate in feeding. This will provide a change for the fish. Please try not to overfeed the fish, and do not feel sorry for them and think they are not getting enough they eat the small bacteria and vegetable life in the tank. Overfeeding sours the aquarium water and causes it to become cloudy.

Once a week it may be necessary to add a small amount of water to make up for that which has evaporated. This water may be drawn from the tap, but make sure it is the same temperature as the aquarium water. Adding cold water chills the fish and causes them to get *Ick* or *Ichthyoplithiris*. This is noticeable by the appearance of white spots on the sides of the fish. It is highly contagious and unless checked will spread to all the other fish. If this condition appears in your tank, while not deadly, it is serious and should be treated immediately. To do this raise the temperature of the water gradually up to eighty-five degrees. and use one of the several good remedies on the market. Use according to directions. and in twenty-four to forty-eight hours your fish should be well again.